

Guidelines: Evaluating Children's Fiction

- **Before Reading:**
 - What kind of book is this?
 - What does the reader anticipate from the title?
 - dust jacket illustration?
 - size of print?
 - illustrations?
 - chapter headings?
 - opening pages?
 - For what age range is this book intended?
- **Plot:**
 - Does the book tell a good story?
 - Will children enjoy it?
 - Is there action? Does the story move?
 - Is there conflict?
 - Is there suspense?
 - Is the plot original and fresh?
 - Is it plausible and credible?
 - Is there preparation for the events?
 - Is there a logical series of happenings?
 - Is there a basis of cause and effect in the happenings?
 - Is there an identifiable climax?
 - How do events build to a climax?
 - Is the plot well constructed?
- **Setting:**
 - Where does the story take place?
 - How does the author indicate the time?
 - How does the setting affect the action, characters, or theme?
 - Does the story transcend the setting and have universal implications?
 - Is there symbolism in the setting?
 - Does it contribute to the story?
- **Theme:**
 - Does the story have a theme?
 - Is the theme worth imparting to children?
 - Does the theme emerge naturally from the story, or is it stated too obviously?
 - Does the theme overpower the story?
 - Does it avoid moralizing?
 - Does the story have sub-themes?
 - Is the theme(s) implicit or explicit (primary/secondary)?
 - How does the author use motifs or symbols to intensify meaning?

- **Characterization:**

How does the author reveal characters?

Through narration?

In conversation?

By thoughts of others?

By thoughts of the character?

Through action?

Are the characters convincing and credible?

Do we see their strengths and their weaknesses?

Does the author avoid stereotyping?

Is the behavior of the characters consistent with their ages and background?

Is there any character development or growth?

Had the author shown the causes of character behavior or development?

- **Style:**

Is the writing appropriate to the subject?

Is the style straightforward or figurative?

Is the dialogue natural and suited to the characters?

Is the diction (word choice, imagery, etc) suitable for the intended reader?

How did the author create a mood (tone)? Is the overall impression one of mystery?
gloom? evil? joy? security?

- **Point of view:**

Is the point of view from which the story is told appropriate to the purpose of the book?

Does the point of view change?

Does the point of view limit the reader's horizon, or enlarge it?

Why did the author choose this particular point of view?

- **Additional considerations:**

Do the illustrations enhance or extend the story?

Are the illustrations consistent with the story?

Are the pictures aesthetically satisfying?

How well designed is the book?

Is the format of the book related to the text?

What is the quality of the paper?

How sturdy is the binding?

How does the book compare with other books on the same subject?

How does the book compare with other books written by the same author?

How have other reviewers evaluated this book?

What age range would most appreciate this story?

Are there any "red flags" to address?